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A random sample of all women 25 years of age or older, enrolled for the fall 1966 semester at three mid-western universities, were mailed the Adult Coed Attitude Inventory. The responses (607 plus) were returned on mark sense cards, hand verified, and tabulated on a computer. The inventory gathered information on age, marital status, employment, extracurricular activities, families and family attitudes toward the return of the women to school, school services found to be helpful, academic programs, financial status, and potential employment. The last part of the questionnaire was a projective design to assess how the subjects viewed themselves and their role, and how they compared themselves with other women. Some differences in the sample responses were found when the data for each school was examined individually. The author touches briefly on these. (PS)

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ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT COED AT SELECTED UNIVERSITIES

All about us we hear that times are changing, mores are changing, families are changing, education is changing. We might ask "What pray tell is not changing?" Women are changing and the education of women is changing. The changes are not to the degree that many would like or that others would hope but it is changing.

In the day of the great TV commercial we might pause now for that commercial. This study was made possible by the Lena Lake Forrest Fellowship Fund of the national Business and Professional Women's Foundation. One other word from my alternate sponsor. The work was also done while I was a graduate research assistant with Dr. Laurine E. Fitzgerald, Assistant Dean of Students at Michigan State University, who is also our gracious chairman today.

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The subjects for the study were a random sample of all women twenty-five years of age and older enrolled fall semester 1966 at Oakland University, Rochester Michigan; Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan; and Purdue University Regional Campus, Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Adult Coed Attitude Inventory (authored by Dr. Fitzgerald and me) was mailed to the sample with more than a 60% return. No follow-up was made. The responses were returned on mark sense cards, all cards were hand verified and tabulated on a computer.

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In the past decade much attention has been given to the woman in the American society. In 1963, a report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, American Women, one of the areas of investigation was the education and counseling for the mature woman. Higher education has been concerned with the education of women since women were first admitted to

institutions of higher education over one hundred years ago. In these days of mechanization, women have a greater chance to compete in the labor force since physical endurance is not a factor to consider in many jobs. In the expanding economy of our country, able and trained workers are in great demand. These demands will have to be met, in part, by women. Today women are marrying at an earlier age than before and are having their children while they are younger. Since this early marriage and child bearing period coincides with the time that would normally be spent in college these women find themselves at twenty-five and older and are not educated or trained to seek employment above the unskilled level. The need for workers in the unskilled level is decreasing each year. It is with this background that many women are returning to the college and university campuses as adult coeds.

What about this adult coed? They are fairly evenly divided in age brackets of 30-34 (19%), 35-39 (20%), 40-44 (18%), and 45 (16%), and older. A few more are in the 25-29 (25%) range. Of the women surveyed 80% were married, 12% were single and the remainder were widowed, divorced or separated. Eighty-two per cent of the subjects had had some college before their return as an adult coed while only 17% were entering college for the first schooling since they finished high school. These women studied have had jobs running the gamut from unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled work and today 27% are employed full time while 59% are unemployed or work only occasionally. When women return to school, extra activities including community service, volunteer work and church activities, are sacrificed for study time. Over 90% devote five or less hours per week to these activities.

What about these coed's families? Eighty per cent have children and 20% have pre-schoolers at home. These women see their children's attitude, in the main, as interested, enthusiastic and a few felt that their children had encouraged them to return to the campus. The coed's husbands are a

little older on the average than their wives and 38% are professionals 25% are semi-professionals. Husbands were viewed as quite supportive in the return to college of their wives. Twenty-nine per cent stated that the husband was the one who encouraged their return to school and less than 5% saw their husbands as opposed to their continued education.

Academic advising was viewed by the coeds as the most helpful service given by their school. Since their return to school over 50% have earned up to fifty credits. Six per cent of the coeds are pursing associate degree work, 16% a Bachelor's program and 23% are working for teacher certification. Seventy-eight per cent of the women expect to obtain their goal in the next five years and 69% expect to be gainfully employed within five years. Two thirds state that it is not a financial necessity for them to work. Incidentally 75% of them expect to earn between $4,000 and $9,000 per year. I believe that you will understand very soon that their expectations are realistic in view of the fact that 62% of them expect to teach and 10% plan to enter nursing or other allied health fields. From these data it would seem that the great majority of women surveyed are preparing themselves for employment that has long been stereotyped as feminine. Creative conformity might be the term to best describe these adult coeds. Some writers would have the public believe that most adult coeds are just taking space in the college class room and yet less than 2% are taking work for purely personal enjoyment.

What is the financial status of these coed's families? Husbands' incomes were: 2% earned less than $4,000 per year, 24% earned from $4,000-$9,000 per year, 26% earned from $9,000-$14,000 per year, 15% earned from $14,000-$20,000 per year and 10% earned above the $20,000 per year figure. As you can see more than one-half earned what would be well above the poverty level.

When questioned about their potential employment the subjects were

asked: "If you are offered a position with a salary greater than your husband's salary will you (a) accept without a thought, (b) think it over and let him help you make a decision, (c) turn it down if he doesn't want you to accept, (d) accept even if he doesn't want you to accept or (e) turn it down without any discussion. Twenty-six per cent would accept without a thought, 48% would think it over and let him help them make a decision, 5% will turn it down if he doesn't want them to accept, 1% will accept even if he doesn't want them to accept, and 4% will turn it down without any discussion. Sixteen per cent could not answer since they had no husband. The same approximate figures held true when job prestige greater than husbands' job prestige was considered. When asked, "Who pays the bills for your education" 48% noted husbands as the source of financing, 28% financed college from personal income or savings while 10% financed college from scholarships and loans.

The last part of the questionnaire was a projective design to assess how the subject's view themselves and their role and how they compared themselves with other women. Each was asked to check four of twenty statements which they felt were <u>most like themselves</u> and four of the same twenty statements which were <u>most unlike themselves</u>.

Those statements which they felt were most like themselves were in rank order: There are many things I want to know more about; the uncertainties of the future require that a woman be able to support herself; I can better educate my children with the additional income; education will help me be of service to other people; more education will help me to become a better citizen; for the first time in my life I have the time and money to pursue learning; I need the education to get the job I want; and more education will help me be a better mother.

Those statements which they felt were most unlike themselves were in rank order: Some of my friends have returned to college; my children want

me to have more education; I have wondered whether I had the ability to achieve academic success; education is a good way to meet people; I want to get out of the house a few hours per week; I want to be able to say that I have a college education; my husband wants me to have more education; and more education will halp me be a better wife.

When asked tc check statements as to which were most like and most unlike their best friends, these women checked the same statements and only the relative rank of each changed. One exception was noted however, the women surveyed felt that their best friend's husbands were less supportive in their wives pursuit of higher education than their own husbands had been toward their education. The only negative note from the sample was one rather hostile, emphatically stated comment, the statement was that her husband was her best friend and that the statements were not apropos for him.

These results have represented the total response of all three universities. When looking at the data for each school individually, there were some differences in the sample responses. The item of husbands income was one such response. Comparing the Oakland University sample to Purdue University's sample the less than $4,000 per year income was the same but, the $4,000-$9,000 per year range the Oakland women reported 15% of their husgands in this category and Purdue women reported 30% or twice as many, in the $9,000-$14,000 per year range Oakland women reported 33% of their husbands and Purdue women reported 28%. The Oakland women reported 19% and the Purdue women reported 12% in the $14,000-$20,000 per year range. In the above $20,000 per year figure, the Oakland women reported 22% and the Purdue women reported 4% (Oakland has 5½ times as many as Purdue in the $20,000/yr.) In other words 74% of the Oakland women have husbands who earn above $9,000 per year and only 44% of Purdue women have husbands who earn above the $9,000 per year figure.

The other item of noted difference was the aspirations of Oakland women

as compared to Purdue women. The Oakland women aspired to higher educational goals than did Purdue women. I am not sure if there is a cause and effect relationship here and if there is, which is cause and which is effect. In both items the Michigan State women were in between and more closely resembled the national statistics.

Sometimes it is easy to forget that the subjects of any research study are live, functioning real people. When the response cards came back, there were several who included notes about themselves and the study. One respondent wrote: "Hooray! Someone is interested in the problems of the adult coed! I cannot resist the temptation to add a personal note, albeit only to a machine which cannot tabulate it. With the rising number of fellow "older" women attending classes, I hope some considerations will be given to them. Example: As a new transfer student, I was tempted not to attend the required orientation sessions at my college in September. At great inconvenience, (my children were not yet in public schools because of the later starting date) I attended. I certainly learned which clubs I might want to join, what to wear to what function, the punishment for plagarism, etc. Women past 30 don't need these facts so important for 18 year olds."

"We do not appreciate being paired for debates or projects with a younger student (who doesn't appreciate it either!) I could go on, but this is an example. But--and this is a flip side of the coin, I get very unhappy when I hear these women say "Oh, I can't do that assignment (or whatever) because my family..., or my children...". These women, through proper guidance, must be told of their responsibilities as a college student. I see many women with too many family responsibilities trying to attempt college work. Thank you for initiating the study. There are needs to be met, and this is a beginning."

Another note, "I feel that I must add a note--, I am so very happy over

returning to school. I am 51 years of age--an undergraduate in nursing--at present--owner and operator of a 32 bed nursing home. Our oldest son will be 34 in December--married--four children--receives his Drs. degree in physics in January. His wife has her Bachelor in business. One daughter refused a college education and she now has two boys--one eight years the other three and a half. I had my nurse's training after my first marriage--always regretting marrying so young and not continuing with my education. Finally, I built up enough nerve to attempt college. It hasn't been easy. I finally cleared my credits for entrance and passed entrance exams but, after so many years I have had to really strive to get back to the school routine--studying and etc. School is easier now and I am enjoying every minute of it--my husband is a graduate engineer."

If you will recall the fall of 1966 the collegiate football title was very close between Notre Dame and Michigan State. This last comment by one of the respondents will help to prove that the adult coed is indeed a college girl. The card came back marked in pen while the instructions noted to use a #2 lead pencil. Sorry, she said, the N.D.-M.S.U. game caused me to use a pen rather than a pencil.